

# ROCKEFELLER INTERNATIONALISM

*David Rockefeller's  
"one world" vision  
for global economic  
interdependence  
involves US  
leadership in  
fostering  
collaboration with  
other nations rather  
than the  
implementation an  
imperialistic  
agenda.*

## Part 4

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### THE "PROUD INTERNATIONALIST": DAVID ROCKEFELLER (1915 – ) Towards "One World"

Clearly, government positions have held few attractions for David Rockefeller. However, as an unofficial but uniquely powerful "ambassador without portfolio", David has been able to do "a lot of interesting things" without ever being called to account. Driving most of his activities over the past 40 years has been his vision of creating "a more integrated global political and economic structure—one world". To achieve this goal, David has supported a multidimensional strategy comprising US global leadership, the United Nations, multinational corporations, international economic integration, global and regional free trade, and global governance.

The cornerstone of David's New World Order vision is US leadership. David traces his devotion to the concept to when he "returned from World War II believing that *a new international architecture had to be erected* and that the United States had a moral obligation to *provide leadership to that effort*".<sup>31</sup> In the immediate post-war period, according to David, America "played a pivotal—and, for the most part, a highly constructive—role in the world".<sup>32</sup> This role David has insisted on maintaining, irrespective of changes to the global political landscape and America's position in it. Despite America having lost much of its strength, "[w]e are still a major power in the world and, as such, *have a responsibility we cannot shirk*", David proclaimed in 1980 to the Los Angeles World Affairs Council.<sup>33</sup> In fact, "we must restore our rightful role in the world by reasserting the strength of our currency and our economy", David argued in a 1979 address that warned of America's economic decline.<sup>34</sup>

For David, US leadership has never meant unilateralism or a crude imperialism to secure global dominance; instead, it had to be used to build a New World Order based on supranational institutions and economic interdependence. This was to be achieved through cooperation with other nations, either in a "trilateral partnership" with Western Europe and Japan (see Part 5) or under the tutelage of international organisations such as the UN. "With the dissolution of the Soviet Union," David told a Business Council for the United Nations (BCUN) gathering in 1994, "the opportunity for *enlightened American leadership* is, perhaps, even greater than it was in 1939, at the beginning of the Second World War, or in 1945 when the Cold War began."<sup>35</sup> However, it was an "illusion" that "Americans by themselves have the wisdom to frame sound policy for a diverse community of nations", David claimed on the occasion of the CFR's 75th anniversary. That goal could only be achieved "through patient collaboration among leaders from many countries", with the US playing a key role in "fostering that collaboration".<sup>36</sup>

And just as his brother Nelson argued 30 years before, David insists in *Memoirs* that the United States has no choice in the matter, for international circumstances are compelling and irresistible; America *must* lead:

*The United States cannot escape from its responsibilities. Today's world cries out for leadership, and our nation must provide it. In the twenty-first century there can be no place for isolationists; we must all be internationalists.*<sup>37</sup>

But in asserting that this "internationalist" policy must be followed, David also makes this veiled criticism of the increasingly imperialistic agenda adopted by the administration of George W. Bush:

*The world has now become so inextricably intertwined that the United States can no longer go it alone, as some prominent politicians have urged that we should. We*

are the world's sole superpower and its dominant nation economically. **One of our duties is to provide judicious and consistent leadership** that is firmly embedded in our national values and ideals.<sup>38</sup>

Although crucial, US leadership has not been the only component of David's vision; undermining national sovereignty through economic integration has been of equal importance. As the only trained economist of his generation of Rockefellers, having been taught by the leading free trade and free market theorists of the 1930s and 1940s, David has long been aware that the power of national governments can best be undermined by steadily reducing their control over economic matters. In fact, he has always regarded government regulation as an obstacle to prosperity and often argued for the need to "prune the forest of rules and let the economy grow".<sup>39</sup> But in advocating the lifting of restrictions on business, whether through deregulation or free trade, David has always recognised that this will erode national autonomy.

For example, in a lecture he gave in Manchester, UK, in 1975, David singled out multinational corporations (MNCs) as one of the other main drivers of this process, describing them as "the most important instruments in the unprecedented expansion that has taken place in world trade". The purpose of his lecture, however, was to defend MNCs from the "new demonology" emanating from the Third World-dominated UN General Assembly, primarily in the form of the so-called New International Economic Order and Lima Declarations. These declarations aimed to reorder the world economy by subjecting MNCs to global regulations, relieving Third World debts and changing international trade rules to favour developing countries. Finding this agenda objectionable, David accused the "revolutionary left" and "radical politicians" of "calling most persistently for punitive taxes and crippling regulation of multinationals".<sup>40</sup>

It was in his concluding prescription that David Rockefeller made it clear how crucial MNCs are to his goal of an integrated global economy:

*We should be doing all in our power to lift the siege that is taking shape around our beleaguered multinational companies. **They still have much work to do in helping to create a true world economy.** We must let them get on with this unfinished business.*<sup>41</sup>

Another feature of David's push for global economic integration has been his contention that breaking down the barriers to trade and investment was essential to world order. Arguing the case for foreign investment in 1969, David suggested that if Western businesses were to expand the reach of "modern technical society" to encompass the Third World, this would "do more than anything...to restore and strengthen the hope in the idea of international cooperation".<sup>42</sup>

"In a world of growing interdependence," David told British writer Anthony Sampson in the 1970s, "the last thing we want is protection."<sup>43</sup> Indeed, the "expansion of trade" and the "emergence of a genuine world economy", David declared at Manchester in 1975, were "our best prospects for maintaining peace among nations".<sup>44</sup>

## Integrating the Western Hemisphere

David has not only pursued his goals globally, but has sought to establish economic interdependence at the regional level. Most of his efforts in that regard have been devoted to the economic and political integration of the Americas, or the Western Hemisphere. To achieve this, in 1965 David created a business lobby group, the Council for Latin America, now known as the Council of the Americas (COA). The Council's purpose, David explained in a *Foreign Affairs* article in 1966, was to "stimulate and support economic integration". But in supporting this objective, David's ultimate aim was to lock the entire region into a neo-liberal policy matrix, making it more attractive to MNCs. Without integration, David argued, "there is inefficient division of markets and costly duplications of effort"; only through "closer cooperation" could the Latin American nations "make the best of their own resources and provide the broadest appeal to foreign investment".<sup>45</sup>

Nearly 30 years on, the Council remains committed to these goals, describing its purpose as "promoting regional economic integration, free trade, open markets and investment, and the rule of law throughout the Western Hemisphere". It is an agenda that the COA expects will eventually deliver "the economic growth and prosperity on which *the business interests of its members depend*".<sup>46</sup> This approach should not be surprising, for David has long objected to the "faulty economic model" of government regulation, subsidies and protectionism that most Latin American countries adopted in the 1960s.<sup>47</sup>

In 1964, David publicly complained about the growing popularity of "coldly anti-capitalist" sentiments in the region, blaming a "relentless campaign" by "Soviet, Castro and Chinese Communist agents". He maintained that this "Communist propaganda" had convinced many Latin American politicians to impose laws aimed at "curtailing or expelling foreign investors". Claiming to be "genuinely distressed" at the "feeble

response" of US corporations, David insisted on a strategy to "combat the Communist propaganda", warning his fellow American businessmen that, if they failed to act, "we stand in grave danger of losing our investments, our markets".<sup>48</sup>

In *Memoirs*, David casually boasts of his role in reversing this trend as the founder and Chairman of his other philanthropic organisation, ostensibly dedicated to Latin American cultural affairs: the Americas Society. In 1983, the Society's Latin American Advisory Council, set up by David, agreed on the need to find a solution to the devastating debt crisis then afflicting most of Latin America—a crisis David's bank had a direct role in instigating. David then tasked the Institute for International Economics (of which he was a board member) to research the issue and propose a solution. The result was the influential IIE study, *Toward Renewed Economic Growth in Latin America* (1986), which advocated "lowering trade barriers, opening investment to foreigners, and privatising state-run and -controlled enterprises".<sup>49</sup>

These prescriptions are now known, quite aptly, as the "Washington Consensus", seeing it was the Washington based and controlled IMF that imposed these policies on the region, reportedly to devastating effect.<sup>50</sup>

With most of Latin America finally moving toward free trade

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by the late 1980s, David has since pursued with increasing vigour not only his longer-term goal of "Latin American economic integration" but the economic integration of the entire hemisphere. In 1989, David called for intensified economic cooperation between the US and Latin America; and three years later, at the COA-sponsored Forum of the Americas, attended by then President George H. W. Bush and regional leaders, he proposed creating a "Western Hemisphere free trade area".<sup>51</sup>

David later noted with some pride that participants at the Forum were "unanimous" in supporting the goal of a "full Western Hemisphere free trade area by 2000". In line with this overall objective, David was a staunch supporter of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), declaring in the *Wall Street Journal* in 1993 that he did not think "criminal would be too strong a word to describe...rejecting NAFTA".<sup>52</sup>

The success of David's efforts is apparent in the agreement, reached in Quebec in April 2001, to begin to establish a Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), covering the whole hemisphere (except Cuba) by 2006. David, who had earlier lobbied hard but unsuccessfully for "fast track" trade promotion authority for Bill Clinton,<sup>53</sup> was able to claim an "integral role" for the COA—and, by implication, himself—in obtaining the same powers for George W. Bush.<sup>54</sup>

However, on his ultimate vision for the region, David remains circumspect, giving away little. For instance, when asked in 2002 if he supported Robert Pastor's vision of a "North American Community" modelled on the European Union,<sup>55</sup> David was evasive, saying only that it was in "our interest" for NAFTA to be extended to South and Central America—before retreating into cant about trade being an "engine of growth and development".<sup>56</sup>

One can only presume that David, like Nelson did, sees the economic integration of the region as a step toward complete global integration.

### The Death of the Nation-State

Like his father before him, and his brother Nelson, David has long regarded the nation-state as a dying institution. Over the past 40 years, in numerous forums, David has declared that the world either is becoming or is already "interdependent" both politically and economically—an outcome he disingenuously attributes to inevitable historical forces rather than his own deliberate design.

In a 1963 address, for example, David referred to the "increasingly international character of American business and the consequent interconnectedness among the world's financial markets".<sup>57</sup>

In the 1970s, he often spoke of "our interdependent world", "today's interdependent world", and of how "we are all part of one global economy".<sup>58</sup>

As the Reagan era dawned, David continued to treat the death of the nation-state as a *fait accompli*, describing "the inevitable push toward globalism" and how "the exponential growth of world trade and international economic competition has given rise to a truly interdependent world economy". In fact, in 1980, David prophesied that "[b]y the year 2000, the term 'foreign affairs' will be an anachronism".<sup>59</sup> He even claimed in 1985 that most Americans have "a strong belief

in the interdependence of mankind".<sup>60</sup>

By the 1990s, with the concept of globalisation fast becoming the business buzzword of the decade, David could confidently talk of "the emergence of globalised competition and an integrated world economy".<sup>61</sup>

Most recently, in *Memoirs*, David leaves no doubt that he thinks we should regard the erosion of national sovereignty as both inevitable and unstoppable:

*Global interdependence is not a poetic fantasy, but a concrete reality that this country's revolutions in technology, communications, and geopolitics have made irreversible. The free flow of investment capital, goods, and people across borders will remain the fundamental factor in world economic growth and in strengthening of democratic institutions everywhere.*<sup>62</sup>

But the more important question is, what does David believe should fill this growing vacuum? What sort of "more integrated global political and economic structure" does the plutocrat have in mind? David's own answers, though fragmentary, reveal a commitment to the concept of global governance. As defined by the Commission on Global Governance, the term refers to an international order in which nations are no longer the dominant political institution, but must share authority not only with the UN system but also with "non-governmental organizations (NGOs), citizens' movements, multinational corporations, and the global capital market".<sup>63</sup>

Having worked hard over the past 40 or more years to erode the power of nation-states—and having created countless other problems of a global nature in the process—David now turns to international institutions, MNCs and NGOs to fill this governmental gap.

Firstly, David has long had a favourable view of international institutions, especially those founded by the US, believing they hold the key to realising his aim to "erect an enduring structure of global cooperation".<sup>64</sup> His commitment to the UN, for example, can be seen in his membership of groups including the United Nations Association of the USA, Allies of the United Nations, and the Emergency Coalition for US Financial Support for the United Nations. In his message to the UN poster exhibition, *For A Better*



"Cat<sup>1</sup> /n. 1. domesticated carnivore (*felis*) and only lifeform not affected, influenced or outrightly controlled by David Rockefeller."

World, in 2000, David claimed that, ever since the UN was created in 1945, he has been "one of its staunchest advocates". He continued:

*There are many who believe the United Nations, through its multiple missions of peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance and the support of sustainable economic development, is the embodiment of hope for mankind. I agree.*<sup>65</sup>

David has also identified the World Trade Organization, NAFTA, the IMF and the World Bank as "constructive international activities".<sup>66</sup> In a "globalized economy", he once wrote in the *Wall Street Journal*, "everyone needs the IMF"—for without it, "the world economy would not become an idealized fantasy of perfectly liquid, completely informed, totally unregulated capital markets".<sup>67</sup>

Secondly, as for the role of the MNCs, David notes that the retreat of state power caused by deregulation has provided many opportunities for the business sector to assume a more political role. In 1996, David argued that with governments reducing their social expenditures, it was up to "business leaders and their corporations [to] expand their involvement" in the "not-for-profit sector".<sup>68</sup> Or, as he put it to *Newsweek* in 1999:

*In recent years, there has been a trend in many parts of the world toward democracy and market economies. That has lessened the role of government, which is something business people tend to be in favour of. But the other side of the coin is that somebody has to take the government's place, and business seems to me to be a logical entity to do that.*<sup>69</sup>

This includes supporting the UN, as in 1994 he told the Business Council of the United Nations that "business support for the numerous internationally related problems in which [the UN] is involved has never been more urgently needed".<sup>70</sup> Yet, in the early 1990s, David reportedly boasted that MNCs had moved beyond being able to help governments to being in control:

*We are now in the driver's seat of the global economic engine. We are setting government policies instead of watching from the sidelines.*<sup>71</sup>

Thirdly, David sees a crucial role for NGOs, including the various philanthropic foundations (a sizeable number of which he controls), in addressing global problems. The message had already been delivered in 1989 by the then President of the Rockefeller Foundation, Peter Goldmark, Jr, at a three-day conference celebrating the 150th birthday anniversary of John D. Rockefeller, Sr. "Every major foundation should have an international dimension to its program," said Goldmark. "In a period of planetary environmental danger, global communications, inter-continental missiles, a world economy and an international marketplace of ideas and arts and political trends, there is simply no excuse not to." David admitted that Goldmark's speech came with his blessing, if not direction, with a decision made to be "meaningful" by focusing on "philanthropy for the 21st century" instead of merely praising John D. Rockefeller, Sr.<sup>72</sup>

The true scope of David's "philanthropy for the 21st century" has become more evident throughout the 1990s, with the Rockefeller Foundation, the Rockefeller Family Fund and the Rockefeller Brothers Fund all providing funding to NGOs, either through direct grants or indirectly via organisations such as the Funders Network on Trade and Globalization. Many of the NGOs that have received Rockefeller-sourced grants—such as the World Development Movement, The Ruckus Society and the Center for Public Integrity—are ostensible opponents of the same corporate globalisation agenda that David has done so much to promote, while others are proponents of strengthened and "democratised" international institutions and laws.

Nevertheless NGOs, through their currently unrivalled ability to circumvent normal diplomatic processes by claiming to represent "civil society", have proved to be very effective, generally publicly unaccountable organs for both eroding national sovereignty and building global governance. As some analysts have observed, NGOs are at the forefront of a "new diplomacy" that "devalues national sovereignty in favour of multilateral agreements" in which interest groups seek to "accomplish internationally what they cannot achieve domestically" (Davenport). The NGO approach, another analyst warned, involves the "undermining of decision-making systems based on

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#### Endnotes

31. David Rockefeller, *Memoirs*, Random House, 2002, p. 406 (emphasis added).  
 32. David Rockefeller, "America's Future: A Question of Strength and Will", *The Atlantic Community Quarterly*, Spring 1979, p. 14.  
 33. David Rockefeller, "In Pursuit of a Consistent Foreign Policy: The Trilateral Commission", *Vital Speeches of the Day*, June 15, 1980, p. 517 (emphasis added).  
 34. Rockefeller, "America's Future", p. 19.

35. David Rockefeller, quoted in *Business Council for the United Nations Briefing*, Winter 1995, p. 1 (emphasis added).  
 36. Rockefeller, *The Council at 75*, September 1997, at the CFR website, <http://www.cfr.org>.  
 37. Rockefeller, *Memoirs*, *ibid.* (emphasis added).  
 38. *ibid.*, p. 419 (emphasis added).  
 39. David Rockefeller, "Facing Up to the Hard Facts of Inflation", *Vital Speeches of the Day*, November 15, 1980, p. 76.  
 40. David Rockefeller, "Multinationals Under Siege: A Threat to the World Economy", *The Atlantic Community Quarterly*, Fall 1975, pp. 313-314, 321.  
 41. *ibid.*, pp. 322 (emphasis added).  
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 43. David Rockefeller, quoted in Anthony Sampson, *The Money Lenders*, Viking Press, 1981, p. 188.  
 44. Rockefeller, "Multinationals Under Siege", pp. 312-313.  
 45. David Rockefeller, "What Private Enterprise Means to Latin America", *Foreign*

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 46. Council of the Americas, *2000 Annual Report*, Council of the Americas, 2001, p. 4 (emphasis added).  
 47. David Rockefeller, "A Hemisphere in the Balance", *Wall Street Journal*, October 1, 1993.  
 48. Rockefeller, "What Private Enterprise Means to Latin America", p. 402; and David Rockefeller, "The US Business Image in Latin America", *Vital Speeches of the Day*, October 15, 1964, p. 8.  
 49. Rockefeller, *Memoirs*, pp. 434-435.  
 50. For a recent scathing review of the impact of these policies on the region, see William Finnegan, "The Economics of Empire: Notes on the Washington Consensus", *Harper's Magazine*, May 2003.  
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 52. Rockefeller, "A Hemisphere in the Balance".  
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 54. Rockefeller, *Memoirs*, p. 438.

constitutionalism and popular sovereignty", in favour of a system that "posits 'interests' (whether NGOs or businesses) as legitimate actors along with popularly elected governments" (Bolton).<sup>73</sup>

Although some NGOs are adamantly opposed to David's pro-market and pro-free trade agenda, his overall strategy appears to be to co-opt, compromise and ultimately control as many of the NGOs as possible, utilising them as a vital third force both for creating and, in some cases, managing the emerging structure of global governance. As for those NGOs that cannot be deradicalised and accommodated, and insist on pursuing more revolutionary anti-capitalist agendas and methods, they have been deprived of funding and left to the mercy of state oppression.<sup>74</sup>

Clearly, the NGOs have their uses, but David will not tolerate the anti-corporate rhetoric actually becoming policy—especially if it threatens his own goals.

### "One World", Ready or Not...

In *Memoirs*, David admits without any trace of irony to his goal of building "a more integrated global political and economic structure—one world". Considering the tangible evidence of David's New World Order agenda, much of it from his own public statements and writings, it would be churlish to dismiss as "right-wing nuts" or proponents of "wacky conspiracy theories" those who have long been suspicious of the plutocrat's activities.

But what is particularly striking about David's New World Order vision is that, despite his sometimes flowery rhetoric about democracy, he has never engaged the voting public on his agenda. Instead, he has used his power and influence to convince, cajole and even coerce political leaders and government officials into supporting policies for which ordinary voters have never asked.

In a working democracy, the exercise of such unelected power should be a serious matter. Publicly acceptable attitudes, however,

ensure that those who object to David Rockefeller's methods and objectives remain marginalised and easily ridiculed. Even though at exclusive gatherings the power-elite will continue to give thanks to David Rockefeller for his unstinting service in promoting "international cooperation", the requirements of the existing political order demand that the significance of these celebrations be denied.

As for the self-described "proud internationalist", the globalisation process he has helped unleash is proving unstoppable, if only because relatively few political leaders are willing to challenge the "consensus".

David now has the luxury of promoting solutions to the

problems he helped cause, as he did in December 2001 in his role as President of the Global Philanthropists Circle. Addressing a forum at the University of Guanajuato in Mexico, David stated that globalisation had created "unacceptable" levels of poverty the world over. "Free trade," he said, "has helped generate wealth, but it has not helped poor people who still find themselves in tough situations." True to his devotion to globalism, the plutocrat acknowledged the work of "social organizations" in improving conditions for the world's

disadvantaged, before recommending that both businesses and governments become more active in preventing people from falling into the "abyss of extreme poverty".<sup>75</sup>

Regrettably, such hypocrisies are typical of the plutocracy...

Continued next issue...

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### Author's Note:

Part Five will continue to examine David Rockefeller's internationalist vision, focusing on his most controversial creation: the Trilateral Commission.

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56. Carla Hills et al., *Memoirs: The Rockefeller Family in International Affairs*, Panel discussion on David Rockefeller's new book at the School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University, October 31, 2002.  
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58. "Rockefeller's prescription for world growth", *Australian Financial Review*, November 23, 1978, p. 2; and Committee for Economic Development of Australia, *David Rockefeller in Australia*, CEDA, 1979, pp. 21, 25.  
59. David Rockefeller, "The Chief Executive in the Year 2000", *Vital Speeches of the Day*, January 1, 1980, pp. 163-164.  
60. Rockefeller, "Giving: America's Greatest National Resource", *Vital Speeches of the Day*, March 15, 1985, p. 329.

61. Rockefeller, "America After Downsizing", *Vital Speeches of the Day*, March 15, 1985, p. 40.  
62. Rockefeller, *Memoirs*, p. 406 (emphasis added).  
63. Commission on Global Governance, *Our Global Neighbourhood: The Report of the Commission on Global Governance*, Oxford University Press, 1995, pp. 2-3.  
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69. David Rockefeller, "Looking for New Leadership", *Newsweek*, February 1, 1999, p. 41 (emphasis added).  
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72. Goldmark and Rockefeller, quoted in "Call for US Philanthropies To Address Global Problems", *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 31, 1989.  
73. For an examination of this underreported role of NGOs, see David Davenport, "The New Diplomacy", *Policy Review*, December 2002–January 2003, and John R. Bolton, "Should We Take Global Governance Seriously?", *Chicago Journal of International Law*, Fall 2000. Bolton is now Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security in the Bush Administration.  
74. Susan George, "Democracy at the Barricades", *Le Monde Diplomatique*, August 2001.  
75. Rockefeller, quoted in "Rockefeller: globalization has increased world poverty", *TheNewsMexico.com*, December 3, 2001, <http://www.thenewsmexico.com>.